

MORE BANG FOR BATHROOM BUCK

Updating bathrooms is a key way to attract better tenants and higher sale prices, **Jai Breitnauer** uncovers the key products to invest in.



Making a bathroom look modern without over-capitalising is key to getting the most out of your bathroom reno.

Whether you're looking to rent out and see your investment grow, or flip a property quickly and move on, be

assured tenants and buyers will be looking closely at the quality of the bathroom.

"The bathroom is a major touchpoint for people looking to rent or buy homes," says Maintain to Profit operations director

Dean Larritt. "You don't need to spend too much, but they do need to be done well."

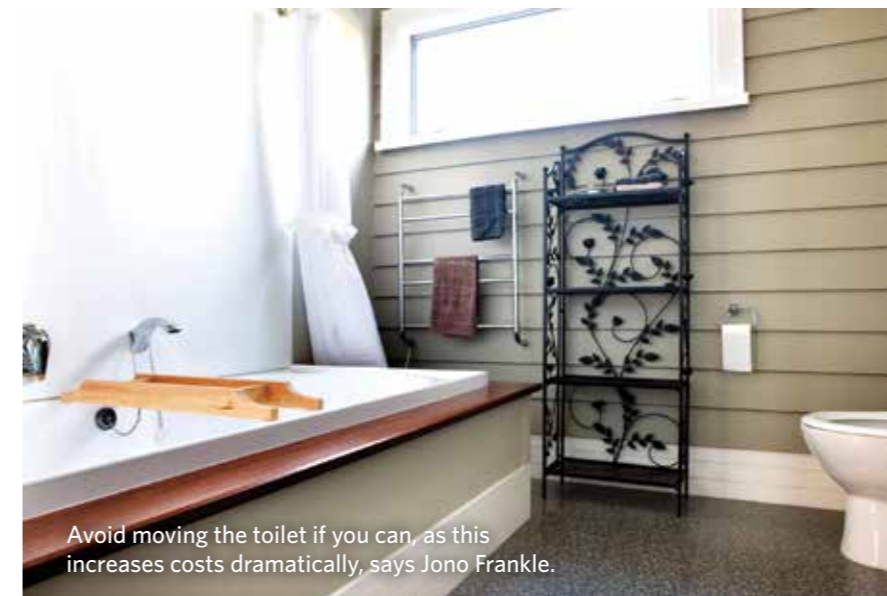
First and foremost, says Larritt, always put a bath in when there is space. "A bath is ideal for families, and a shower over bath is a handy space saving option that can make life easier with young children," he says. "Just make sure you aren't using one on an external wall with a window as this will increase the maintenance cycle."

Larritt says that bathroom suites can come quite cheap these days, but suggests always buying branded vanity and tapware, like Methven. "Then if you do have a part failure, it's easy to replace."

If you are fitting a separate shower, Larritt recommends a fully sealed enclosed unit if it's for a rental, and to have it installed by an accredited shower fitter. "It will reduce maintenance, but only



If you are putting a shower over a bath, never install it against an external wall with a window as it increases the maintenance cycle, says Dean Larritt.



Avoid moving the toilet if you can, as this increases costs dramatically, says Jono Frankle.

if it's done right. An accredited installation should come with a three to five-year warranty."

Larritt notes that moisture is a major issue in bathrooms, so if you are renting, then installing a shower dome can pay dividends. He also says it's vital to install an extractor fan. "Make sure the power is attached to the light switch with a timer to start after a minute and an over-run. That way you know it's being used."

Using a heated towel rail with a timer is another good suggestion from Larritt that helps keep moisture and mildew at bay. Regular inspections will help lower the cost of maintenance, as problems can be spotted and fixed quickly.

The most important thing with any bathroom renovation is timing.

"When you're renovating a bathroom it's a minimum of five working days, so if the house has no second bathroom try and time it between tenancies," he says. "Minimise your property's down-time by making sure the contractors have had access to prepare and quote before the tenancy finishes. Then they will be ready to go the day after the tenant moves out and can turn it around pretty quickly."

PAPAKURA PROPERTY FLIP

Jono Frankle has invested in a number of different properties over the years, both on his own and with friends. Some of them are long-term rental investments and others are bought for a quick turnaround.

"Last year we bought a property in Papakura for a quick flip," says Frankle. "It needed a bit of cosmetic work, including updating the bathroom and en-suite."

Frankle bought the three-bedroom family home in June 2016 for \$512,000, and spent five weeks renovating it at a cost of \$35,000. He sold it in September for \$635,000 - a profit of \$88,000 - and he believes the bathroom and en-suite renovations were key to a good sale price.

"The two main areas you need to bring up to speed in a house are bathroom and kitchen, whether it's for rental or resale. They're a 100% vital part of a property, and need to be nice," says Frankle. "The main bathroom in this house had a small shower-bath thing, and was not really useable so we re-jigged the bathroom to fit a full-size bath across the back wall."

RENOVATION STRATEGY: BATHROOMS

PAPAKURA BATHROOM RENO

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Toilets \$200 each: \$400
Vanities \$300 each: \$600
Bath: \$500
Shower liner: \$300
Tapware: \$300
Flooring: \$700
Paint: \$700
Lighting: \$150
Trade labour: \$700
Total cost: \$3850 for bathroom and en-suite. The full renovation took five weeks, but the bathroom and en-suite took just six days to complete.

Frankle says his target market were young families so a bath was a vital addition.

"I've got a 20-month-old and without a bath I don't know how we would survive," he says. "If you have a young family then you need a bath and it's simple to do."

He says to avoid moving the toilet if you can, to keep the costs down. The vanity is easy to move and plumbing is quite flexible although Frankle kept his shower head in the same place. He notes that because the bathroom wasn't that big, they decided to use a wall-hung vanity unit to create a sense of space.

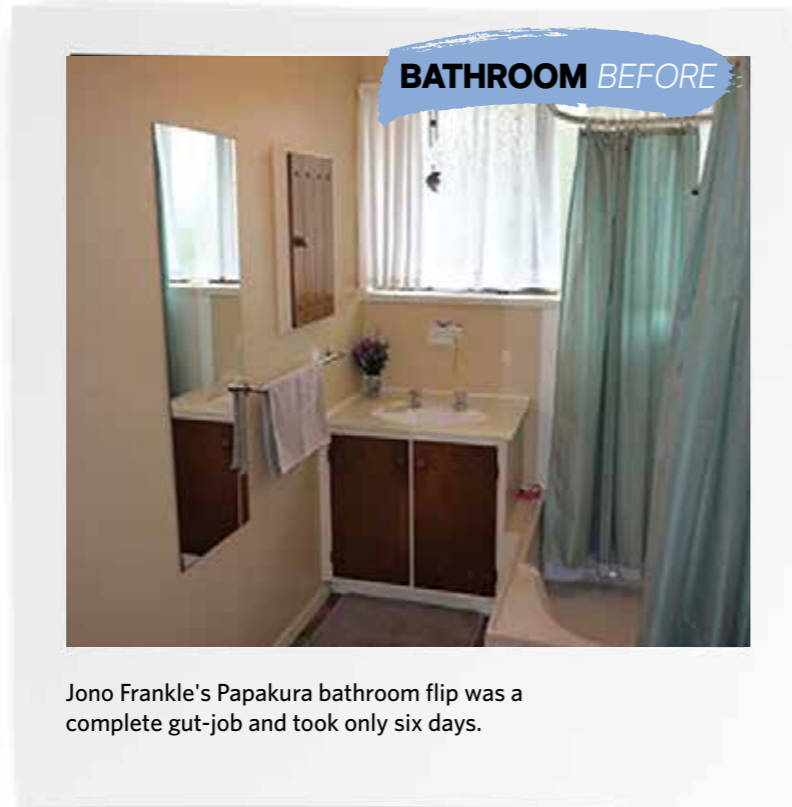
If you can, re-use the shower liner to keep costs down.

"We repainted in neutral colours, and used a high-quality vinyl flooring which is much more cost-effective than tiles. Tiles are the next level up."

In the en-suite they went for new vinyl flooring, a new toilet and new shower head as well as a re-paint.

"My wife chooses all the hardware and suites," says Frankle. "Always go for a modern, white suite with chrome hardware. It's nice and simple and easy to clean."

“Minimise your property's down-time by making sure the contractors have had access to prepare and quote before the tenancy finishes”
– Dean Larritt



Frankle says they went for mid-priced branded tapware as it doesn't cost that much more but is perceived as added value for the buyer. But he warns against over-capitalising.

"You need to make sure whatever money you are spending you are getting back. Make it look modern but don't go over the top."

He also says that rather than do the work yourself, build relationships with tradespeople who can do it for you more quickly, probably to a higher standard, and free your valuable time up to

focus on other aspects of the business. Tradespeople are also better equipped to deal with problems when they arise.

"The only real challenge we had was when we pulled up the floor in the main bathroom and part of the existing floorboards had rotted away due to a leak," says Frankle, who points out that when you are removing flooring and wall linings in wet areas, you never really know what you will find. "Thankfully it was easy to fix. The builder on site got it sorted in half a day. But you need to factor in time for small delays like this." ■

PAINT FIXES

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If your bathroom is looking tired, but you aren't able to move your tenants out for a full reno, then Karen Warman from Resene says there are a few small changes you can make with tenants in situ to revitalise the space. "Any tiled or laminated surfaces in dry areas can be painted," says Warman. "Just seal with Resene Waterborne smooth surface sealer first. It provides something for the paint to grab on to because smooth surfaces like tiles are slippery. Then choose Resene Waterborne enamel paint. It is low odour and quick to dry, so you can be in and out quite quickly."

Remember not to paint in wet areas like the shower. To re-vamp cabinetry, Warman suggests using Resene Waterborne enamel as a base-coat, and Resene Lustacryl as a top coat. Update the handles for a whole new look.

"The other trick for a bathroom is to treat the mould before you paint, otherwise it grows through the paint," she says. "Use Resene moss and mould killer first, then you can paint over it. If there is a lot of mould address the ventilation."

For added protection, buy your paint from the Resene Kitchen and bathroom range, with antibacterial silver and mould defender. "Finally, remember to choose your colours wisely," says Warman. "Don't go too bold or too bright."